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No. VII.

ETCHING ON IVORY.

The sum of FIVE GUINEAS was this session presented to Mr. J. CATHERY, 6, Hyde-street, Bloomsbury, for his mode of Etching on Ivory, a specimen of which has been placed in the Society's repository.

THE usual mode of ornamenting ivory in black, is to engrave the pattern or design, and then to fill up the cavities thus produced with hard black varnish. The demand for engraved ivory in ornamental inlaying, and for other purposes, is considerable, although the price paid for it is not such as to encourage artists of much ability to devote themselves to this work, which consequently is trivial in design and coarse in execution. Mr Cathery's improvement consists in covering the ivory with engraver's varnish, and drawing the design with an etching needle; he then pours on a menstruum composed of one hundred and twenty grains of fine silver, dissolved in one ounce measure of nitric acid, and then diluted with one quart of pure distilled water. After half an hour, more or less, according to the required depth of tint, the liquor is to be poured off, and the surface is to be washed with distilled water, and dried with blotting paper; it is then to be exposed to the light for an hour, after which the varnish may be removed by means of oil of turpentine. The design will now appear

permanently impressed on the ivory, and of a black or blackish brown colour, which will come to its full tint after exposure for a day or two to the light.

The property which nitrate of silver possesses, of giving a permanent dark stain to ivory and many other substances has been long known ; but Mr. Cathery has the merit of having advantageously applied it in a department of art in which it is likely to be of considerable service by improving the quality of the ornament, and at the same time of diminishing the cost. Varieties of colour may also be given by substituting the salts of gold, platina, copper, &c. for the solution of silver.